Talking points . Al- Sisi. Egypt. Feb 29, 2016

Al Sisi (AS for short): Professional Soldier. Background in Intelligence. Good political instincts. Strong. Self confident. Determined. Personally, effective person-but has to work with extremely *ineffective* apparatus in all areas: Ministries, civil servants, bureaucracies, armed forces, secret services, etc.

Power base: mainly the Armed Forces. Now, the new Parliament, full of his loyalists.

Main Challenges facing AS:

(1) **: Economy. Economy. Economy**. 1.2M NEW Egyptians to feed and employ each year. Hurt tourism sector (Rusian jet Explosion). Canal and work-force abroad helps, does not suffice. No Arab support (they all have *their own* problems. Including: oil prices, declining reserves political uncertainties at home). Positive:Recent Gas discoveries, ENI, Mediteranean, more than 700 BCM, no funds to develop. Success in widening the Canal (partially two-way).

(2) **Security and terror at home:** Muslim Brotherhood, Still powerful among ordinary Egyptians. A political dormant threat as well. Daesh/ISIS, strong. especially in Sinai. Might trickle into Cairo, Alexandria.

(3) **Neighbors:** Libya,. Chaotic. Al Qaeda and ISIS base. Threatens to spread into Egypt.
Saudi Arabia. Stopped financial support. Deep concern regards it's stability. Reserves. Salafists. Insurgency.

(4) **Iran:** AS critical of the Iran deal. Worries re Iran hegemonic intentions, Nuclear long term intentions, emerging financial clout, oil production. Insurgency. Shi'a supremacy.

(5) **Syria:** AS frustrated. Against Assad .Too weak today, to play any role.

(6) **Hamas in Gaza**: A rival. Perceived as cooperating with ISIS Sinai.

(7) **Big Powers**: The U.S.: AS is extremely critical, furious at US foreign policy and its dealing with Egypt in recent years, but careful not to leave it 'on record'. He still needs their annual paycheck.
Russia: AS wants to strengthen and deepen relations with Russia. He does not feel fully free with Putin. Not confident in reading Russian leaders.
China: AS is *genuinely* open to China on all economic and non-military issues. But, know them very superficially, and somewhat suspicious, based on what he hears in recent years from several (Sub-Saharan) African leaders who turned more critical of Chinese involvement in their economies.

Long Term National Concerns:

(8) Egypt decline as THE main Arab (and Sunni) pillar in the M.E.

(9) Nile Water agreements: Strongly preferred Egypt. Now, about to expire. Ethiopia (85m people, fast developing, building huge high (Renaissance) dam on the Blue Nile. A MAJOR STRATEGIC THREAT TO EGYPT, might overshadow any other challenge in just few years time.

(10) Economy.Economy.Economy.

Al Sisi expectations:

Personally: Respect. Dignity. Friendship. Reciprocal visit.
Recognition of his achievements in bringing back stability and a ray of hope for extremely tortured nation and people.

Nationally: Acknowledgment of the centrality of Egypt in M.E.

(a) AS might subtly ask for support for Egyptian positions in Muslim Countries international forums.

(b) AS is highly interested in immediate financial support, but might hesitate to raise it, having in mind the problems RK is facing.

(c) AS will want to hear RK position on (above mentioned) issues Important to Egypt.

(d) AS will highly appreciate, and probably will not forget, an opportunity to have a one-on-one, more frank conversation about Russia, as well as China , the way they look at the world, and how they operate in the world, with some guidelines re how to deal with each top present leader of those extremely important powers. There is always a need for cautiousness on such conversations. However, AS has a very good record on being fully discrete.
A formative experience for him, might make him a reliable partner for the long haul.